[Translation]

Grants to Voluntary Organisations

1898. SHRI SHATRUGHAN PRASAD SINGH : Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state whether the Union Government have made a provision for extending grants to voluntary organisations, the stage artists and theatre associations on the historic occasion of the 50th years of India's independence and if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI S.R. BOMMAI) : Yes, Sir. An Expert Committee set up by the Department of Culture has invited about 100 eminent artistes born after independence to give them an opportunity to pay tribute to the independence and to bring into focus the post independence achievements in the form of a performance of their choice. A maximum grant of Rs. 50,000/- shall be sanctioned in each case.

Opening of New Depots

1899. SHRI VIRENDRA KUMAR : Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state :

(a) the number of new depots set up for distribution of petroleum products during the last three years;

(b) the numbes out of these in Madhay Pradesh;

(c) the reasons for not starting depots of Indian Oil and HPC in Naryavali, Sagar districts in Madhya Pradesh; and

(d) the time by which these depots are likely to be started?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) Tankages of 12.3 lakhs KL have been commissioned during the last 3 years under various additional product tankage programmes.

(b) The tankages at following locations were commissioned in the State of Madhya Pradesh during the last three years :-

Location	Company	Tankage (KLs)
Dehri	IOC	8000
itarsi	IOC	8376
Bhittoni	HPC	5210
Raipur	HPC	12210
Satna	HPC	500
Total		34296

(c) and (d) The depots of IOC and HPC in Naryavali, Sagar Districts in Madhya Pradesh could not be fully commissioned as the connection of the siding with the main railway track could not be completed by the Central Railways. According to the latest indications given by the Central Railways, all the work would be completed by August, 1997 and the Depots are expected to be commissioned by September/October, 1997.

[English]

Licences for Methane Gas

1900. SHRI ANNASAHIB M.K. PATIL : Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state :

(a) whether attention of the Government has been drawn to the newsitem captioned "Gujarat Government refuses to let Centre claim rights to coal gas; call its own global bids" as appearing in the 'Financial Express' dated July 7, 1997;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the reaction of the Government thereto; and

(d) the details of total estimated reserves of Methane Gas established in the country so far and steps taken for exploitation of this resource to meet requirement of industrial needs?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Government of Gujarat, in February, 1994 and March, 1997, has issued notifications under the provisions of the Mines and Minerals (Regulations and Development) Act, 1957 permitting prospecting operations in respect of Coal/Lignite Bed Methane (CBM) by the State public Sector and Department of the Geology and Mining of the State Government.

(c) The State Government has been informed by the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas that the CBM comes within the definition of "Petroleum" and "natural gas" as defined under the Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Act, 1948 and the Petroleum and Natural Gas Rules, 1959 and consequently the exploration and exploitation of CBM falls in the jurisdictional ambit of the Union Government.

(d) The current estimates of Coal Bed Methane (CBM) in the country have been tentatively placed at about 1000 billion Cubic Meters. Government has recently approved a new policy for exploration and exploitation of CBM. The policy proposals provide for global competitive bidding for granting licences for exploration and exploitation of CBM, a fiscal and contractual framework for this purpose and specific incentives to investors.